

ACTION WHA-00

B1, 1.4(D)

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	PERC-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	VC-00
H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	PA-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00
AC-00	NSAE-00	OIC-00	SSO-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	
SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	
USIE-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	
	/001W						

-----F2CB55 262246Z /38

R 262232Z FEB 04
 FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5115
 INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
 AMEMBASSY LISBON
 AMEMBASSY MADRID
 AMEMBASSY MEXICO
 AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
 NSC WASHDC
 USCINCSO MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000651

NSC FOR CBARTON
 USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD
 STATE PASS USAID DCHA/OTI FOR RPORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/28/2013
 TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, VE
 SUBJECT: CIVIL REBELLION CHARGES SPARK PROTESTS IN MERIDA

REF: A. CARACAS 552
 B. CARACAS 3161-2003
 C. CARACAS 2032-2003
 D. CARACAS 1746-2003

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, A/DCM, for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

Summary

1. (C) Pro-GOV Merida State Governor Florencio Porras ordered an investigation against 24 opposition-aligned citizens in January, alleging civil rebellion stemming back to events in April 2002, when President Hugo Chavez was briefly removed from power. Students led violent protests January 29 and February 12 in support of the implicated Meridans, which

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: APPEALS REVIEW PANEL
 CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
 DECLASSIFY AFTER: 25 FEB 2024
 APPEAL ACTION: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELEASED
 REASON(S): B1, 1.4(D)
 DATE/CASE ID: 04 MAR 2008 200404750

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: MELVIN E SINN
 DATE/CASE ID: 30 JUN 2005 200404750

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

include student leaders and professors. Opposition leaders have characterized the charges as a political witch hunt, timed to leave them leaderless during regional elections and distract attention from presidential recall efforts. Pro-GOV contacts largely confirmed the political timing of the charges, although they defended the Governor's right to press them. End Summary.

24 Opposition Leaders Accused of "Civil Rebellion"

2. (U) Pro-GOV Merida State Governor Florencio Porras (Fifth Republic Movement or MVR) started an investigation in January implicating 24 opposition-aligned political, business, and student leaders in civil rebellion during April 12, 2002. The alleged rebellious acts the morning after President Hugo Chavez was briefly removed from power involved opposition supporters gathering outside the statehouse to demand Porras also step down. University of the Andes (ULA) professor and ex-Merida Mayor Fortunato Gonzalez told poloff February 5 that prosecutor Danilo Anderson delivered summons January 22 for 15 to 16 members of the group to attend a formal reading of the charges January 29, which also include conspiracy, assault, and deprivation of movement. In addition to Gonzalez, Porras is accusing student leader Nixon Moreno, Merida Chamber of Commerce President Cesar Guillen, Merida Mayor and gubernatorial candidate Carlos Belandria (Democratic Action or AD), and gubernatorial candidate and former governor Jesus Rondon Nucete (Christian Democrat or COPEI), among others.

Opposition Attacks Charges as Unconstitutional

3. (C) Guillen explained that he and seven other implicated Venezuelans filed a joint motion to throw the charges out on constitutional grounds. The judge concluded February 4 that he was not competent to rule on the matter. Anderson claimed Judge Aranbulo Brady was prejudiced against him and requested another judge February 3.



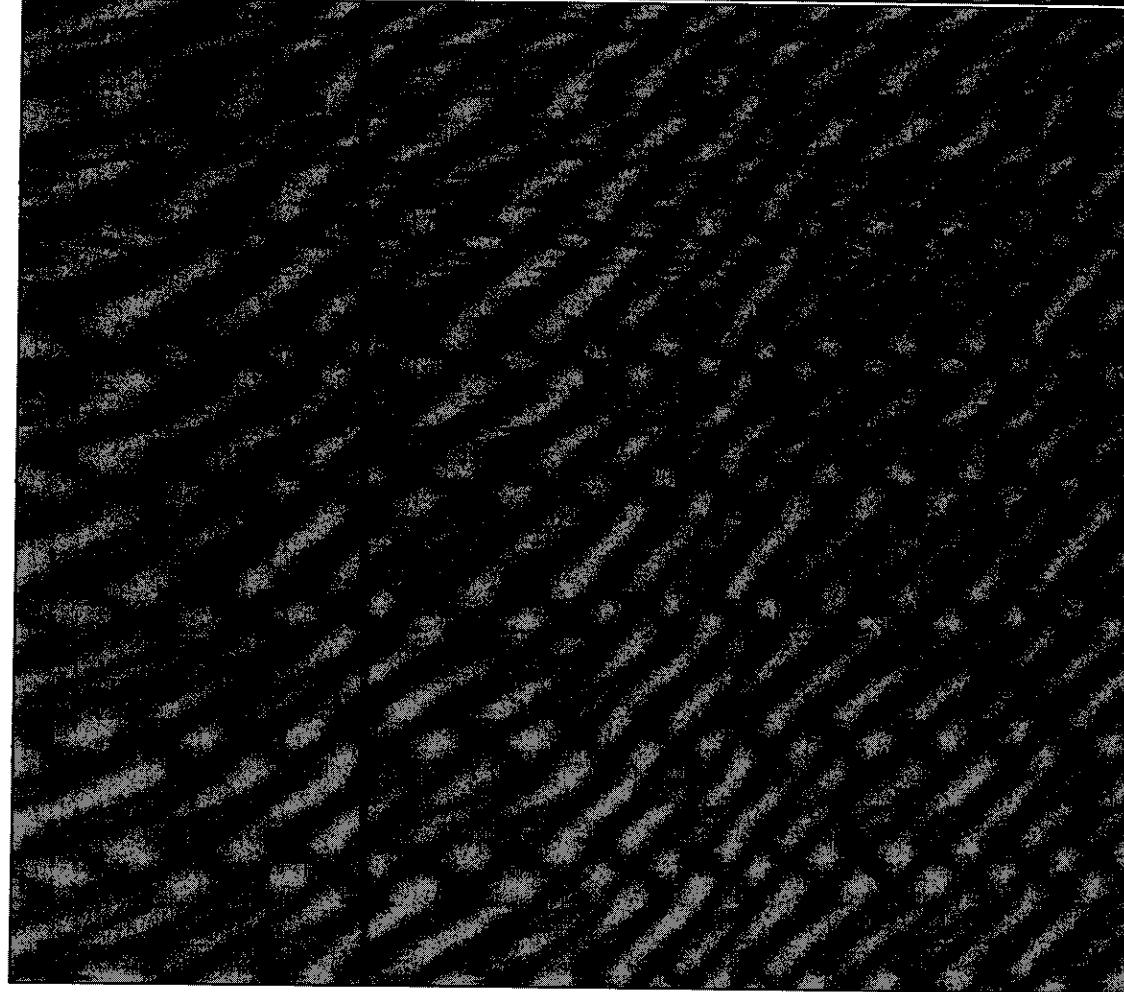
B1

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

B1

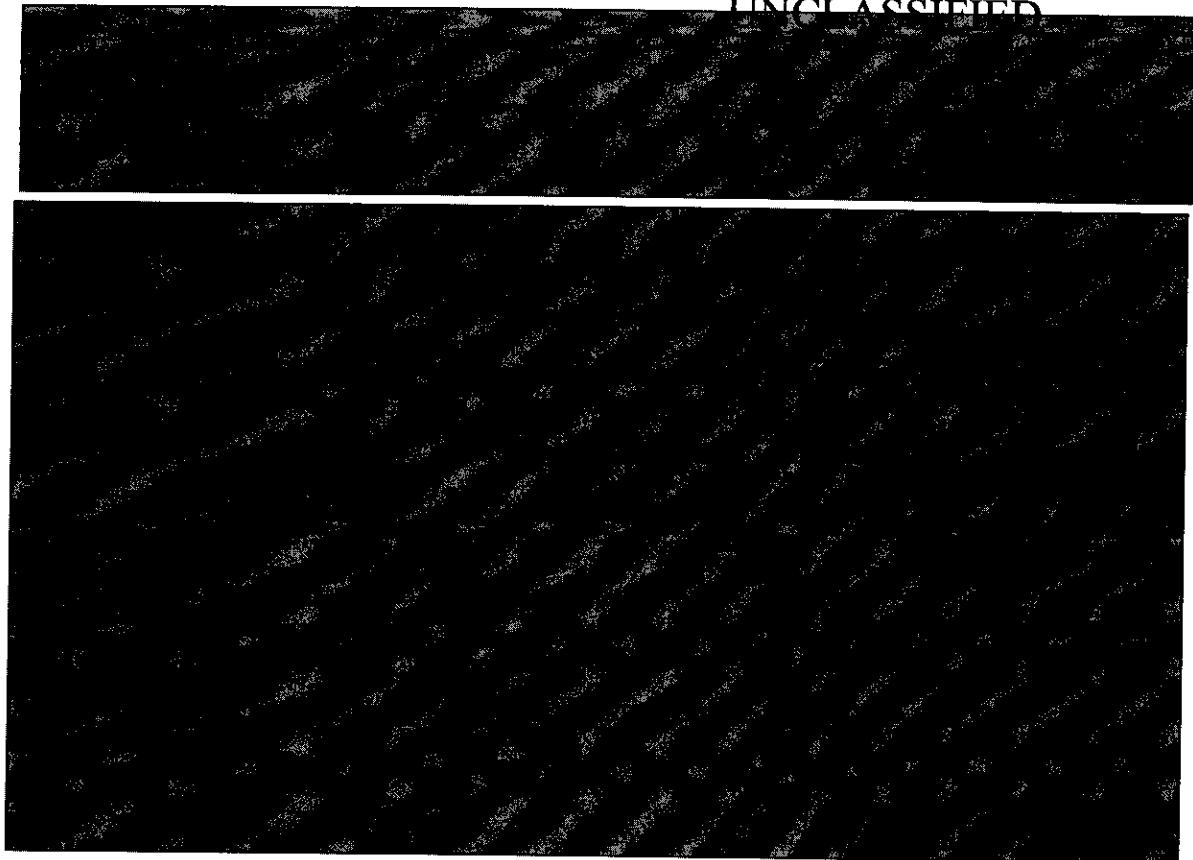
B1



Most MVR Sources Agree Charges are a Political Tool

7. (C) Two out of three pro-GOV Merida contacts that discussed the issue with poloff agreed that the charges were political in nature.

UNCLASSIFIED

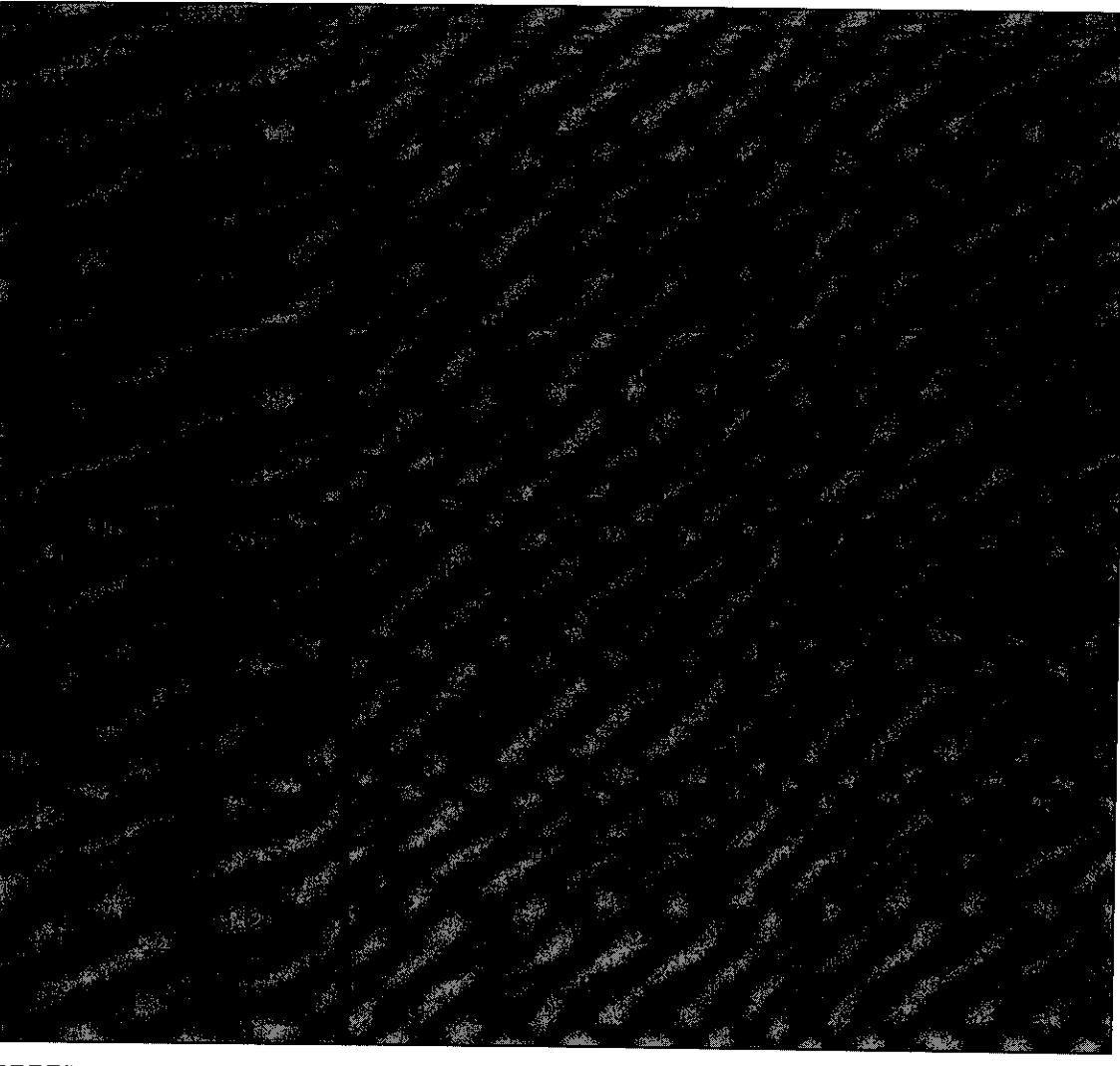


Charges Spark Violence in Student Protests

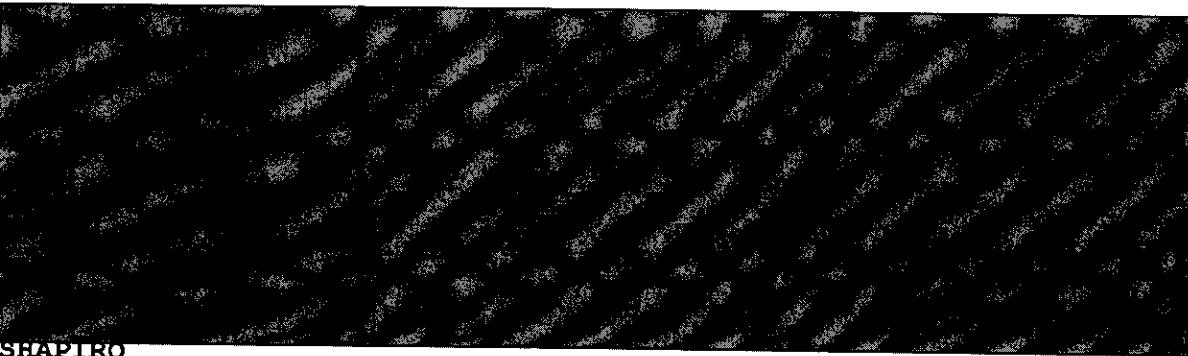
10. (C) Student-organized protests broke out January 29 and February 12 in Merida [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] other students protested across Venezuela February 12 to show solidarity with the Merida students, protest decisions made by the National Electoral Council (CNE), and celebrate the Day of Youth (ref a).

UNCLASSIFIED



Comment



SHAPIRO

NNNN

UNCLASSIFIED